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Current affairs summary for prelims

1 October, 2024

Pusa-2090

Context: *Recently, to combat farm fires, the government is exploring new rice varieties Pusa-2090.*

Overview:

- The government is exploring different rice varieties to tackle farm fires in Punjab and Haryana.
- Pusa-2090 can be harvested by early to mid-October, reducing the need for stubble burning before wheat sowing.

What is Pusa-44?

- **Development:** Created by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in 1993.
- **Maturity:** Takes 155-160 days to mature.
- **Yield:** High yield of 35-36 quintals per acre, occasionally reaching 40 quintals.
- **Economic Benefit:** Extra yields translate to earnings of Rs 9,280-11,600 at the government-set minimum support price of Rs 2,320 per quintal.
- **Environmental Cost:** Long growing period leads to late harvests, prompting farmers to burn straw for quick field preparation, contributing to air pollution.
- Widely cultivated since 2000, preferred for its high yield.

What is Pusa-2090?

- **Development:** A newly bred, shorter-duration variety developed by IARI as a potential replacement for Pusa-44.
- **Maturity:** Matures in 120-125 days, similar to PR-126.
- Yield: Produces 34-35 quintals per acre, close to Pusa-44's yield.

Benefits of Pusa-2090

- **High Tillering:** Maintains a high number of tillers and grains per panicle, comparable to Pusa-44.
- **Strong Culm:** Less prone to lodging in adverse weather.
- **Water Efficiency:** Requires 5-6 fewer irrigations than Pusa-44, which needs 29-30 irrigations.
- **Harvest Timing:** Allows for earlier harvesting, facilitating timely preparation for the next crop.

Viability as a Replacement

- **Yield Comparison:** Pusa-2090 offers a lower reduction in yield compared to Pusa-44, making it an attractive option.
- **Quality Consideration:** For wider acceptance, Pusa-2090 must match the milling quality of Pusa-44, which is favored by millers for its higher rice recovery rate.
- **Current Status:** Despite a government ban, farmers continue to cultivate Pusa-44 using saved seeds, with it covering 14.8% of Punjab's non-basmati paddy area in 2023.

Cyber slavery Report

Context: *Amid recent reports of 'cyber slavery,' the telecom ministry plans to disconnect 2.17 crore mobile connections.*

Overview:

- Recent reports indicate over 30,000 Indians are stranded under 'cyber slavery' in Southeast Asia.
- Over 5,000 Indians are suspected to be trapped in Cambodia for forced cyber fraud.
- Government estimates reveal Indians were duped of at least Rs 500 crore in six months.

Key Points on Cyber Slavery from the Report

- **Travel Data:** From January 2022 to May 2024, 73,138 Indians traveled to Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam on visitor visas.
- Current Situation: 29,466 of these Indians are still unaccounted for and may be trapped.
- **Definition of Cyber Slavery:**
  - ✓ Refers to individuals lured by job promises but coerced into illegal online work.
  - ✓ Victims often have their passports confiscated upon arrival.
- **Living Conditions:**
  - ✓ Individuals are confined in guarded facilities, with minimal freedom and withheld earnings.
  - ✓ Control is maintained through threats of violence or reporting to authorities.
- **Types of Fraud:** Victims are involved in various digital scams, including investment fraud and online dating scams.
- **Financial Impact:** Reports indicate that these scams have caused approximately ?800 crore in losses for victims in India, as the scammers often communicate in the same language.
- **Scamming Tactics:** Victims create fake social media accounts to lure investments into fraudulent cryptocurrency schemes, often leading to significant financial losses.

Telecom Measures

- **Disconnection of Mobile Connections:** The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) plans to disconnect 2.17 crore mobile connections linked to forged documents or cybercrime.
- **Blocking Handsets:** Alongside disconnections, 2.26 lakh mobile handsets will also be blocked.
- **KYC Implementation:** DoT is enhancing Know Your Customer (KYC) measures for SIM card procurement to prevent misuse.
- **International Call Monitoring:** In May, telecom operators were directed to block incoming spoofed international calls; 35% are currently dropped.
- **Data Collection:** Telecom service providers must report weekly on Indian mobile numbers roaming in Southeast Asia to aid in identifying scams.

Face to Face Centres

DELHI MUKHERJEE NAGAR: 9205274741, 42 | LAXMI NAGAR : 9205212500, 9205962002 | RAJENDRA NAGAR: 9205274743 | UTTAR PRADESH PRAYAGRAJ: 0532-2260189, 8853467068 | LUCKNOW (ALIGANJ): 0522-4025825, 9506256789 | LUCKNOW (GOMTI NAGAR): 7234000501, 7234000502 | GREATER NOIDA: 9205336037, 38 | KANPUR: 7887003962, 7897003962 | GORAKHPUR : 7080847474, 9161947474 | ODISHA BHUBANESWAR: 9818244644/7656949029

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- **SIM Card Sales:** Over 1.4 lakh point of sale agents selling SIM cards across India are under scrutiny for potential involvement in scams.
- **Rise in Cyber Crimes:** Analysis from the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre revealed 45% of cyber crimes targeting Indians originated from Southeast Asia.

Elephants of India

Context: *Recent study identified five genetically distinct elephant populations across India using whole genome sequences.*

Overview:

- A recent study by researchers from NCBS and IISc found that Indian elephants migrated south, losing genetic diversity.
- The study analyzed whole genome sequences from captive and wild elephant blood samples, identifying five distinct populations across India.

About Elephants of India

- The Indian elephant **(Elephas maximus indicus)** is one of three extant recognized subspecies of the Asian elephant, native to mainland Asia.
- **Subspecies:** Includes Indian, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan elephants.
- **Habitat:** Found in grasslands and forests across 13 countries in South and Southeast Asia.
- **Population:** India has over 60% of the world's wild Asian elephants, with a 2017 census recording 29,964 individuals.
- Elephants are considered keystone species and the Natural Heritage Animal of India.
- India has the largest population of wild Asian elephants, estimated at over 30,000.
- **Karnataka** has the highest elephant population in the country.
- **Reserves:** Home to 31 elephant reserves, covering approximately 76,508 square kilometers across 14 states.

Conservation Status

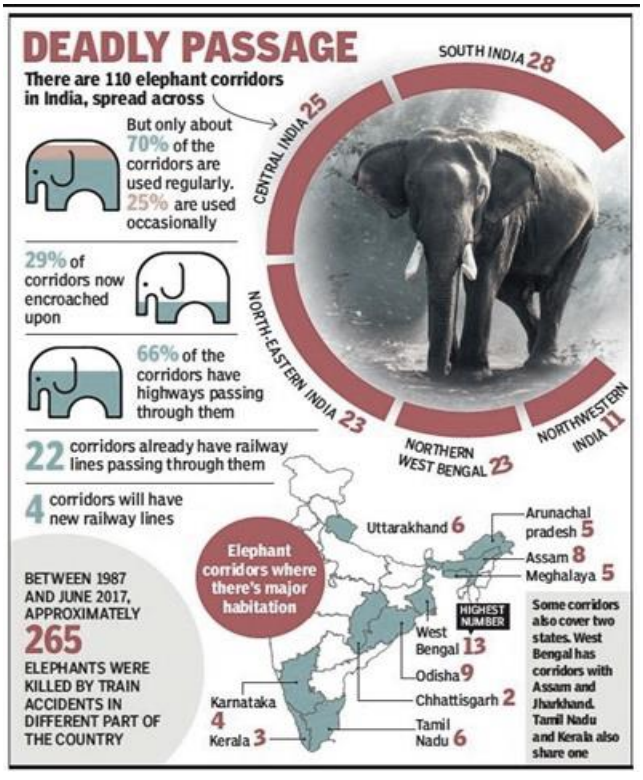
- **Convention of the Migratory Species (CMS):** Appendix I.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I.
- **IUCN Red List:**
  - ✓ ***Asian Elephant:*** Endangered.
  - ✓ ***African Forest Elephant:*** Critically Endangered.
  - ✓ ***African Savanna Elephant:*** Endangered.

Conservation Initiatives

- Right of Passage Project: Led by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), this initiative protects and rehabilitates elephant corridors while addressing human-elephant conflicts, prioritizing conservation interventions.
- **Legal Protections:** State governments are encouraged to designate corridors as State Elephant Corridors, offering legal protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to prevent habitat fragmentation.
- **Community Engagement:** Local communities are involved in corridor conservation through awareness programs and monitoring efforts, such as the Green Corridor Champions.
- **Infrastructure Planning:** Future developments in elephant habitats should consider these corridors to minimize conflicts, requiring collaborative planning with stakeholders.
- **Monitoring and Research:** Ongoing monitoring of elephant movements is crucial for understanding patterns and identifying areas needing protection or restoration.
- **Gaj Yatra:** A nationwide campaign to raise awareness about elephants.
- **Project Elephant:** A government initiative for elephant conservation.

Project Elephant Overview

- **Launch:** Initiated by the Government of India's Ministry of Environment and Forests in February 1992.
- **Objective:** To support states in managing wild Asian elephant populations with financial and technical assistance.



- **Elephant Corridors:** These are narrow strips of land that facilitate the movement of elephants between larger habitats. They are vital for ensuring that elephants can traverse landscapes without human disturbance.

➢ **State-Wise Distribution of Elephant Corridors**

- **West Bengal:** Leads with 26 corridors, accounting for 17% of the total.
- **East Central India:** Contributes 35% with 52 corridors.
- **Northeast Region:** Holds 32% with 48 corridors.
- **Southern India:** Accounts for 21% with 32 corridors.
- Northern India: Has the lowest at 12% with 18 corridors.

➢ **Objectives of Project Elephant**

- **Conservation Planning:** Develop scientific conservation strategies.
- **Combat Illegal Trade:** Curb poaching and illegal trade of elephant tusks.
- **Prevent Deaths:** Address unnatural causes of elephant deaths.
- **Restore Habitats:** Revitalize natural habitats and migratory paths.
- **Reduce Conflict:** Minimize human-elephant conflicts in shared areas.

➢ **Threats to Elephants**

- **Habitat Loss:** Expansion of settlements leads to habitat fragmentation.
- **Human-Elephant Conflict:** Elephants raiding crops leads to conflict and casualties on both sides.
- **Poaching:** Targeting for ivory and body parts disrupts populations.
- **Accidental Deaths:** Collisions with trains, electrocutions, and other hazards pose risks.

➢ **Recent Developments**

- **New Rules:** The Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024, have been notified, easing conditions for elephant transfers.
- **Regulation:** Captive elephants are regulated due to their historical significance; translocation is allowed for education and research, under wildlife protection regulations.

➢ **Global conservation:**

- Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme.
- World Elephant Day: Celebrated globally to raise awareness about elephant.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

National Legal Services Authority

Recently, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment signed an agreement with the National Legal Services Authority to extend support and provide legal aid services to marginalized people across the country.

About National Legal Services Authority:

- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) is an organization, constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- It provides free legal services to people in civil and criminal matters who are economically or otherwise disadvantaged.
- These services can include representation in court, payment of fees and preparation of legal documents.
- It organizes Lok Adalats, spreads legal awareness, undertakes social justice litigations and formulates legal service programs.
- The Chief Justice of India is the patron-in-chief of NALSA, while the second senior most judge of the Supreme Court of India is the Executive Chairman.
- Article 39A provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of society and ensures justice for all.
- Its office is located in the Supreme Court of India's Additional Building Complex in New Delhi.

KAZIND-2024

Recently, KAZIND-2024 commenced at the Surya Foreign Training Node in Auli, Uttarakhand.

About KAZIND-2024:

- KAZIND-2024 is the 8th edition of the India-Kazakhstan Joint Military Exercise.
- The exercise commenced on September 30, 2024, and will continue until October 13, 2024.
- The Indian Armed Forces are represented by 120 personnel, primarily from the KUMAON Regiment, with additional participants from other arms and the Indian Air Force.
- The Kazakh contingent consists of personnel from the Kazakhstan Land Forces and Airborne

Assault Troopers.

- The main objectives of KAZIND-2024 are to strengthen military cooperation and focus on counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance during natural disasters.
- The exercise has been held annually since its inception in 2016, serving as a crucial platform for both nations to enhance tactical knowledge and coordination.
- The previous edition of the exercise was held in Otar, Kazakhstan, from October 30 to November 11, 2023.

Dada Saheb Phalke Award

Recently, the Prime Minister of India has congratulated actor Mithun Chakraborty on being conferred the Dada Saheb Phalke award.

About the Dada Saheb Phalke award:

- The Dadasaheb Phalke Award is the highest honour in Indian cinema and is presented annually at the National Film Awards ceremony.
- This award was first presented in 1969, with actress Devika Rani being its inaugural recipient.
- The award is named after Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, the pioneer of Indian cinema who directed the country's first feature film, Raja Harishchandra, in 1913.
- The award is given to film personalities for their outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema.
- The award includes a Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl, a certificate, a silk roll, and a cash prize of INR 10 lakh.
- Some notable recipients include Satyajit Ray, Raj Kapoor, Lata Mangeshkar, Gulzar and Rajnikanth.
- The President of India presents the award.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India

Recently, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a consultation paper on "Formulating a Digital Radio Broadcast Policy for Private Radio Broadcasters".

About the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India:

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is an autonomous regulatory body established under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
- It regulates telecom services, tariffs and ensures fair competition in the telecom sector.
- It consists of a Chairperson, up to two full-time members and up to two part-time members.
- They are appointed by the Central Government and serve a term of up to three years or until they turn 65, whichever comes first.
- It has the power to issue directives, recommendations and regulations to telecom service providers.
- It safeguards consumer interests and addresses grievances related to telecom services.
- It advises the government on policy matters related to the telecom sector.
- This includes regulations on net neutrality, spectrum auctions and measures to control Unsolicited Commercial Communication (UCC).
- The TRAI Act was amended in 2000 to establish the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT).

POINTS TO PONDER

- What is the name of the euthanasia device that features a 3D-printed detachable capsule and liquid nitrogen? – **Sarco pod**
- Where is the headquarters of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) located? – **Geneva, Switzerland.**
- When was the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) enacted? – **2002**
- Where is the Paumai tribe predominantly located in India? – **Manipur**
- How many notified Basmati varieties are currently recognized under Section 5 of the Seed Act, 1966 in India? – **43**